The Cleveland Museum of Art Announces $25 Million Gift from The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation

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Chair's Challenge Inspires Surge of Support for Key Strategic Initiatives

CLEVELAND (June 19, 2024)—The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) announced a challenge gift of $25 million from CMA board chair Ellen Stirn Mavec through The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation. Mavec's Chair's Challenge was developed to inspire continued philanthropic momentum for the museum and establish funding for key initiatives in its strategic plan, "For the Benefit of All the People."

There are four components to the support the museum has received from The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation. These include $15 million in funding for the CMA's world-renowned exhibitions program and $2.5 million for the museum's landscape master plan. Those two elements represent the final chapters of the $25 million gift. In addition, the

foundation has contributed $5 million to permanently fund the position of curator of decorative arts and support the curator's work and $2.5 million toward the renovation of the museum's north lobby, both of which were announced earlier this year.

"The Cleveland Museum of Art has always been a source of inspiration for my family, and that sentiment has only grown under Bill Griswold's leadership," said Ellen Stirn Mavec, chair of the CMA board and president and chair of The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation. "It is our sincere honor to support the CMA's curators, exhibitions, gardens, and space—and our profound hope that others will be inspired to join us."

The CMA's internationally recognized exhibition program is instrumental in drawing new audiences, advancing scholarship in the history of art, engaging the public, and telling stories that the museum's permanent collection cannot do alone. Special exhibitions in Cleveland often draw on the breadth and depth of the CMA's permanent collection and complement them with works on loan from other institutions and private collections. The caliber of the museum's exhibitions makes the CMA one of the most respected museums in the world.

The $2.5 million portion of The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation's gift for the CMA landscape master plan supports the ongoing development of the museum's historic grounds and adjacent Fine Arts Garden. Since its dedication in 1928, the CMA's Fine Arts Garden has become a place for the exhibition of sculpture, including Chester A. Beach's magnificent *Fountain of the Waters*; Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker;* a bronze sculpture in the CMA's collection; as well as contemporary sculpture on the museum's north lawn.

The Fine Arts Garden transformed the outdoor space once known as Wade Park into a garden for all the public to enjoy. While the CMA's grounds have expanded with the Nord Family Greenway, East Bell Commons, and the Smith Family Gateway, some of the earlier elements of the Fine Arts Garden and museum grounds require repairs, updates, and maintenance. The support of The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation provides momentum for all those initiatives.

The foundation's leadership gift also includes $5 million to fund the position of curator of decorative arts and support the curator's work in such essential areas as exhibitions, research, scholarship, and outreach. This contribution—announced earlier in 2024 as part of a series of gifts supporting key curatorial, conservator, and administrative positions—is the first of its kind, combining funding for the curatorial position with financial support for the curator's efforts.

The CMA's decorative arts collection is internationally renowned, both for its quality and its diversity. Ada de Wit, who joined the museum in August 2023 from the Wallace Collection in London, has been designated Ellen S. and Bruce V. Mavec Curator of Decorative Arts.

The remaining chapter of the Chair's Challenge includes $2.5 million for updates to the Horace Kelley Art Foundation North Lobby and the Susan M. Kaesgen Education Gallery and Lobby. The renovations create opportunities for students and other visitors to engage with the museum's Education Art Collection, enable the CMA to develop student- and community-curated exhibitions, and provide updated accommodations for the entry of large groups. All this will help the CMA to realize an important ambition articulated in its strategic plan: to welcome 100,000 pre-K through grade-12 students annually.

The Chair's Challenge for the lobby renovation was met with support from numerous other donors including Jon and Jane Outcalt, James and Susan Ratner, the Sauerland Foundation. In total, the Chair's Challenge for the lobby renovation has inspired full funding for the project, allowing the museum to complete the project free of debt.

"This generosity and leadership is at once humbling and inspiring," said William M. Griswold, director and president of the CMA. "Support from Ellen and The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation empowers us to make huge strides toward realizing some of the most important and ambitious goals of our strategic plan and creates a wave of momentum for our philanthropic endeavors."

The Cleveland Museum of Art is committed to free public access for the benefit of all the people forever. Philanthropic support lies at the heart of museum operations. With the generosity of its benefactors, the Cleveland Museum of Art remains among the finest museums in the world. For more information on how to participate, please visit the museum's website.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship, and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC),

which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs, and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org.